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Workshop to Help Small Farm Businesses Break into Wholesale Market

Program features best practices for small farms to sell to commercial and institutional buyers

Frederick, MD - As demand for local food soars opportunities abound, but to take advantage and grow, growers need help navigating the wholesale market. On January 23-24, 2017, Community FARE (Food-Advocacy-Resources-Education) a local non-profit organization, with support from the U.S.D.A and FamilyFarmed, will host the "Wholesale Success" workshop. The program was developed and will be led by the FamilyFarmed's Atina Diffley, an organic farmer and author of the 2012 award winning memoir, *Turn Here Sweetcorn: Organic Farming Works*.

The event will be held at Fox Haven Organic Farm and Learning Center in Jefferson, MD, which has offered their restored Dairy Parlor for 25 farmers to come together and learn what it takes to work within the wholesale buyer's system. Topics to be addressed include: sizing and grading vegetables and fruit, how to label and assign lot codes, building grower/buyer contracts, pricing, communication, sequential planting, quality control, trends and more. The workshop is intended to bring each participating local farm closer to being able to serve the wholesale market.

Marylanders import 90% of the fruits and vegetables consumed in the state. "Our grocery stores, school cafeterias and restaurants are filled with food that travels thousands of miles and spends up to weeks in warehouses before it makes its way onto our plates," said Janice Wiles, Director of Community FARE. "Changing our food system so that purchases are local and food is harvested nearby will take communication, training, and work on the part of both the buyer and the grower to narrow the gap between them. There are three things we know for sure: Frederick County has great potential to grow more food, significant untapped markets exist within the county and the region, and with new markets farmers will be more inclined to expand their production," said Wiles. "Community FARE (CF) is working to make this happen", she added.

The workshop organizers plan to include a panel of retail and institutional buyers to talk about their experiences buying local and their own specific needs. Farmers would then have an opportunity to talk one on one with a number of the buyers.

Participating farmers will receive a free copy of the Wholesale Success manual. Normally a \$70 retail value, this 300 plus page manual, now in its 5th edition, has been updated to include the latest food safety information from the Food Safety Modernization Act. The Wholesale Success manual covers best practices for food safety, postharvest handling, packing, marketing and crop-specific profiles for over 100 crops.
